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ABSTRACT

This brief reports on the Ford Foundation's establishment of the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) for selected institutions in economically distressed areas of the Southeast, Deep South, Southwest, Appalachia, and western Indian reservations. This is the fourth report in a series by the RCCI Documentation Team. The RCCI program challenges community colleges to become catalysts for change through two mutual and complementary goals: expanding access to higher education and fostering regional economic development. This brief examines the experiences of the nine pilot RCCI colleges and their efforts to acquire the capacities for change, and identifies implications for other institutions facing similar challenges. It suggests that an institution's capacity to meet these two goals requires attention to institutional cultures, leadership style, and organizational infrastructure. In strengthening these areas, community colleges can improve their effectiveness in building human resources and social capacities for survival and success in a changing world. Colleges must look seriously at new roles, partnerships, and marketing, as well as value systems that include team-building strategies, risk taking, and openness to expanded access, economic development, and local cultures. Contains 12 references. (VWC)

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PROJECT BRIEF

AACC-PB-99-3

RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE INITIATIVE

IV. CAPACITY FOR LEADING INSTITUTIONAL AND COMMUNITY CHANGE

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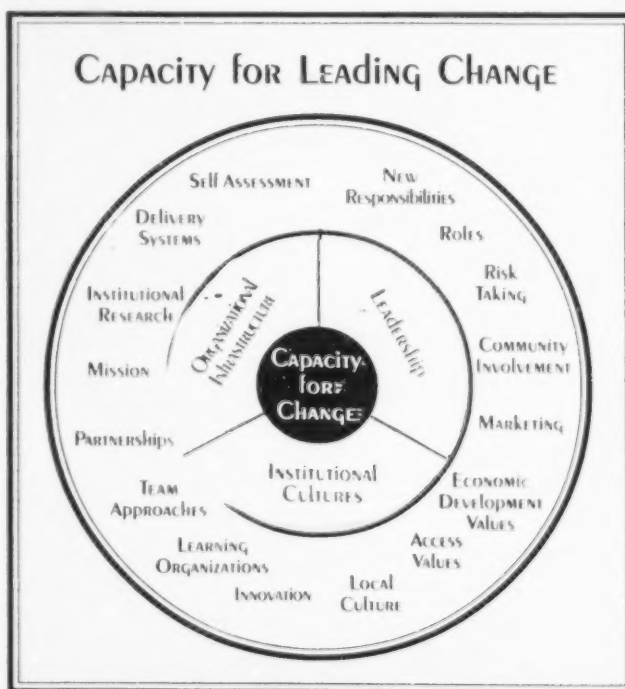
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community colleges in rural communities provide important links between the traditions of the past and the promises of the future. They are ideally suited to encourage innovation, raise expectations, and facilitate the restructuring of institutions and relationships that foster creativity and growth. Because of this positioning, the Ford Foundation established the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) for selected institutions in economically distressed areas of the Southeast, Black Belt/Deep South, Southwest, Appalachia, and western Indian reservations. The RCCI program challenges community colleges to become catalysts for change through two mutual and complementary goals: expanding access to higher education and fostering regional economic development. The experiences of nine RCCI pilot colleges over a four-year period (1995–1999) suggest that an institution's capacity to meet these two goals requires attention to three key areas: institutional cultures, leadership style, and organizational infrastructure.

With attention to these areas, community colleges can improve their effectiveness in building human resources and social capacities for survival and success in a changing world. Specifically, colleges must look seriously at new roles, partnerships, and marketing, as well as value systems that include team building strategies, risk taking, and openness to expanded access, economic development, and local cultures.

CAPACITY FOR LEADING CHANGE



RCCI Colleges

ALABAMA SOUTHERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE, MONROEVILLE, AL*
BLACKFEET COMMUNITY COLLEGE, BROWNING, MT
COAHOMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, CLARKSDALE, MS*
DANVILLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, DANVILLE, VA
FORT BELKNAP COLLEGE, HARLEM, MT*
FORT PECK COMMUNITY COLLEGE, POPLAR, MT*
HAZARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE, HAZARD, KY*
LAREDO COMMUNITY COLLEGE, LAREDO, TX
MERIDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE, MERIDIAN, MS
MOUNTAIN EMPIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, BIG STONE GAP, VA
NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY – CARLSBAD, CARLSBAD, NM
NORTHERN NEW MEXICO COMMUNITY COLLEGE, ESPAÑOLA, NM*
PHILLIPS COMMUNITY COLLEGE, HELENA, AR
PRESTONSBURG COMMUNITY COLLEGE, PRESTONSBURG, KY
SALISH KOOTENAI COLLEGE, PABLO, MT*
SINTE GLESKA UNIVERSITY, ROSEBUD, SD
SITTING BULL COLLEGE, FORT YATES, ND
SOMERSET COMMUNITY COLLEGE, SOMERSET, KY
SOUTHEAST COMMUNITY COLLEGE, CUMBERLAND, KY*
SOUTHEASTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE, WHITEVILLE, NC
SOUTHWEST TEXAS JUNIOR COLLEGE, UVALDE, TX*
TECHNICAL COLLEGE OF THE LOWCOUNTRY, BEAUFORT, SC
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO – GALLUP, GALLUP, NM
WALLACE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, SELMA, AL

* Pilot colleges studied for this report.

This AACC Project Brief, the fourth in a series, is based on a research report prepared by the Rural Community College Initiative Documentation and Assessment Team: Ronald Eller, director, Appalachia Center, University of Kentucky; Rubén Martínez, associate provost, University of Southern Colorado; Cynthia Pace, founder/senior partner, PACEMAKERS; Michael Pavel, associate professor, Washington State University; Hector Garza, vice president, Access and Equity Programs, American Council on Education; and Lynn Burnett, director, Academic, Student, and Community Development, American Association of Community Colleges. Findings in this Brief are based on the experiences of nine RCCI pilot colleges, drawn from information gathered through campus visits, survey instruments, focus group and individual interviews, campus reports, observations of workshops and team meetings over a four-year period, and analysis of the literature on institutional capacity building.

RCCI THE RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE INITIATIVE

For economically distressed rural areas, the local community college can be vital to building the human resources and the social capacities needed in today's environment of high-tech innovation, global marketing, and just-in-time production. In regions such as the Southeast, Black Belt/Deep South, Southwest, Appalachia, and western Indian reservations, community colleges are ideally suited to encourage innovation, raise expectations, and facilitate the restructuring of institutions and relationships that foster creativity and growth.

In 1993, the Ford Foundation created the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) to help community colleges do just that. With grant funding from the Ford Foundation and technical assistance from MDC, Inc., the initiative challenges community colleges in economically distressed rural areas to become catalysts for economic development and to undertake aggressive efforts to expand access to education for underserved populations in their areas. Through technical assistance, workshops, leadership institutes, and other strategies, the RCCI process helps participating colleges to become more reflective, to create partnerships with other organizations, and to build "an institutional culture that supports innovation, risk-taking, and learning" (MDC, Inc., 1998).

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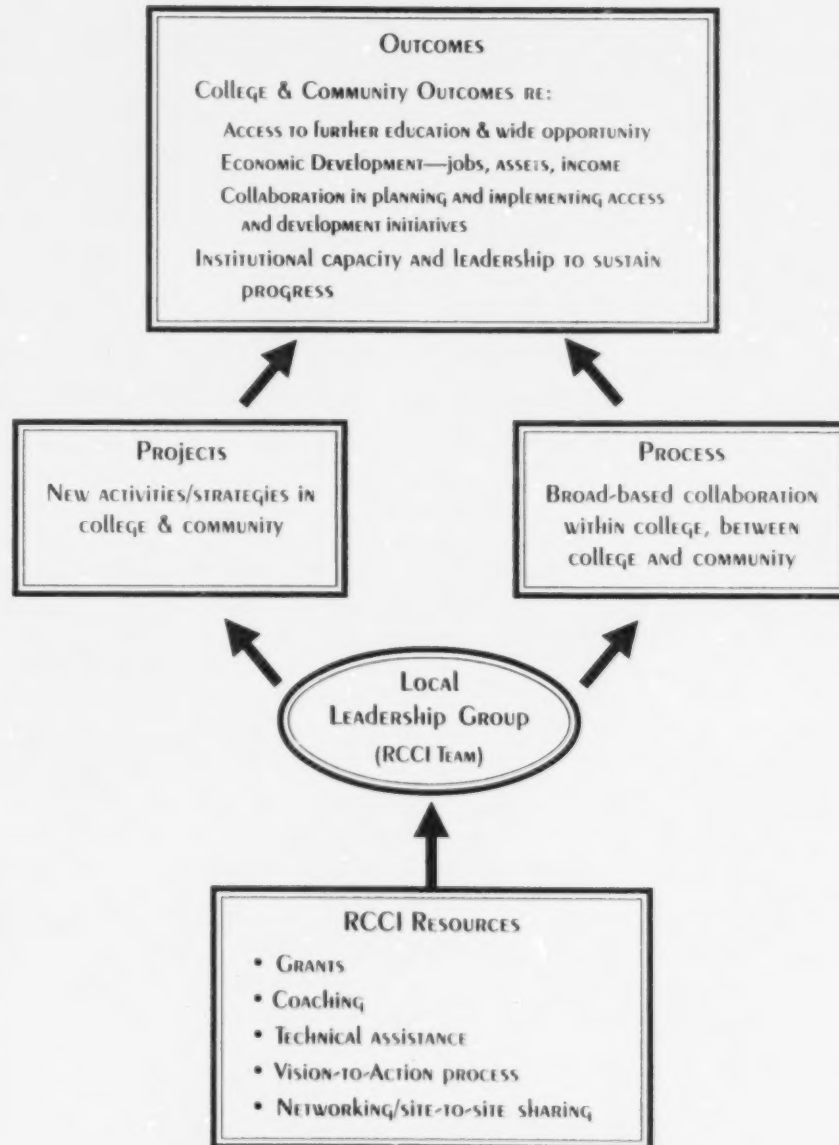
Ultimately, by encouraging institutional change through RCCI, the Ford Foundation hopes to enhance the capacities of the communities themselves to build partnerships for the future. Community colleges have the potential to lead that restructuring and to model the collaborative processes of community building. The role of "civic entrepreneurs" is critical in building dynamic economies, and community colleges can help develop these grassroots leaders within the context of "collaborative communities." Successful communities "practice collaborative advantage. They enjoy strong relationships at the intersection of their business, government, education, and community sectors, which provide regional resiliency and a unique ability to set and achieve longer-term development goals" (Henton, Melville and Walesh, p. xvi, 1997). The leadership of local teams helps bridge the economy and the community.

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES
"PRACTICE COLLABORATIVE
ADVANTAGE [AND] ... PROVIDE
REGIONAL RESILIENCY"

Participation in RCCI has enabled communities in rural distressed areas to create this collaborative advantage by supporting teams of civic entrepreneurs who are brought together through the local community college. This team-building approach seeks to enhance both the civic and institutional capacity necessary for community economic resiliency and growth (Eller et al., 1998a). By supporting college-community teams and facilitating an interactive strategic planning process, RCCI helps rural colleges acquire the capacity to build entrepreneurial and collaborative communities. MDC's "RCCI Model for Institutional Capacity Building and Community Change" (page 4) emphasizes two central approaches for acquiring that capacity—project-driven and process-driven. A project-driven approach may consist of additive models, acknowledging the need for programs and activities necessary to undertake change. A process-driven approach conveys the importance of transformative models that emphasize the shift toward leadership models that facilitate change. Both approaches can result in desired outcomes, but, judging from observation and the literature, when a process approach is included the outcomes are longer lasting.

This report is the fourth in a series by the RCCI Documentation Team. It examines the experiences of the nine pilot RCCI colleges and their efforts to acquire these capacities for change, and identifies implications for other institutions facing similar challenges. It is based

RCCI Model for Institutional Capacity Building and Community Change



Source: MDC, Inc., July 1998

upon four years of field observations, site visits, interviews, focus group discussions, and other qualitative and quantitative data gathered from the colleges and from MDC, Inc. The report focuses on three measures of institutional capacity for change: institutional cultures, the emergence of new leadership styles, and the strengthening of organizational infrastructure within the colleges. Transforming institutions (i.e., making qualitative changes in organizational structures and processes) is a complex and enduring challenge, and the experiences of these colleges differ according to their local contexts and their approaches for achieving the RCCI objectives.

INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

Organizations, like societies, develop their own values and behaviors over time that create a unique institutional culture. An institution's values provide direction and shape its practices in relation to its mission. The more its values are embodied in its practices, the greater the alignment between values and institutional outcomes. Certain characteristics of institutional culture enhance a college's ability to effect change in the community, and RCCI reinforced those aspects of institutional culture.

Although community colleges have always been "good listeners," RCCI involvement added a new respect for the active participation of community leaders in institutional planning.

Education and economic development theories increasingly emphasize the importance of local cultures and community-based strategies, and the RCCI colleges have built stronger relationships with local communities. When they were invited to participate in RCCI, many of the pilot colleges had already operationalized their commitment to community involvement, expanded their course offerings in local culture, and designed limited programs to impact local economic development. Through RCCI, colleges gained resources and strategies to expand the institutional capacity, to place greater emphasis upon the values of teamwork, planning, collaboration, risk-taking, innovation, and community service. Although community colleges have always been "good listeners," RCCI involvement added a new respect for the active participation of community leaders in institutional planning. An examination of changes in institutional culture revealed the impact of some key factors: team approaches, innovation and risk-taking, attributes of a learning organization, values promoting expanded access and economic development, and approaches that value local cultures.

TEAM APPROACHES

Embacing a team approach is at the core of the RCCI process (Eller et al., 1999). Planning sessions, workshops, and leadership institutes accentuated the value of broad-based participation in designing, implementing, and sustaining projects. Colleges that successfully sustained the team approach often experienced the expansion of team-based decision-making into other areas of institutional life. Others used a "projects" approach that yielded significant augmentation through grants and special projects within the college, but the institution's own processes stayed in place and RCCI involvement did not serve fully as a transformative function.

At Alabama Southern Community College, for example, as institutional leaders became convinced of the value of an expanded college-community team, the college's mission was effectively broadened by restructuring the developmental skills program, creating new

technical training centers, and launching new cultural enrichment programs in the community. Similarly, at Hazard Community College, Salish Kootenai College, Southeast Community College, and Southwest Texas Junior College, the RCCI approach resulted in successful models for the implementation of campus-wide strategic planning and interdepartmental program development. At Salish Kootenai College the team approach spilled over into other parts of the campus and community through welfare reform, adult basic education, and tribal economic development.

INNOVATION AND Risk-Taking

Institutionalizing the value of teamwork reflects the emergence at many of the pilot colleges of a new confidence in their ability to shape their own futures and to influence community change. This confidence nurtures an energetic philosophy of innovation and risk-taking that constantly generates new project ideas and seizes opportunities for growth and development. At underfunded rural institutions, launching new initiatives that require long-term commitment of resources and talent involves considerable risk. Costly distance learning technologies, special scholarship funds, small business development centers, and other new ventures committed RCCI colleges to realign institutional practices and resources, and this realignment required shifts in thinking as well.

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Stepping into unfamiliar territory (such as regional economic development or outreach to untapped populations) caused campus leaders to take risks both inside and outside the institution. Expanding team membership resulted in new ideas and innovative practices, some of which challenged established traditions and interest groups. There was "substantial risk" in implementing the RCCI plans, according to one college president, who noted that the college became a "bigger target" as it became more visible.

All the pilot colleges turned the challenges of RCCI into opportunities for institutional change and innovation. RCCI team members at Coahoma Community College were catalysts for full faculty-staff participation in rewriting the college's institutional mission statement and in dealing with pressing internal issues. In institutional cultures where turf protection is common, any change to the status quo is perceived as a risk. The challenge was to create a context in which change would benefit not only the college but also the larger community. RCCI teams took the lead in pursuing innovations on other campuses as well. Recognized for their risk-taking, Alabama Southern Community College's innovative RCCI programs earned it the 1998 National Leadership Award from the National Initiative for Leadership and Institutional Effectiveness, and Hazard Community College received the same award for its campus-wide "Visioning Process," which implemented the RCCI strategic planning process across the institution.

LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

Valuing teamwork, innovation, and risk-taking contributed to the development of RCCI colleges as "learning organizations." Organizational learning, which emerged as a key concept during the widespread economic restructuring of the 1980s, has influenced corporate re-engineering, but also has been embraced by visionary higher education leaders and organizational theorists looking for principles of organizational transformation applicable across the major sectors of society. Organizational learning environments involve highly committed

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UNDERSTAND THEIR WORK ...
WITHIN A SYSTEM.

employees who think critically and creatively, share a vision with team colleagues, actively seek enduring solutions to organizational problems, communicate openly with team members, and understand their work within the interrelationships and processes of a whole (i.e., within a system). Peter Senge's (1994) five "disciplines" of a learning organization—personal mastery, mental models, team learning, shared vision, and systems thinking—are applicable to the RCCI process and the notion of organizational transformation. Through a structured process that included workshops, institutes, and planning sessions, MDC staff and coaches facilitated the movement of participating colleges toward these organizational goals.

The RCCI leadership institutes initially focused on strategic planning processes that resulted in specific goals for the participating institutions. In the process, however, the institutional teams deepened their understanding of the college, its challenges, and its opportunities within the current environment. Team members became committed to institutional improvement and became actively engaged in realizing the RCCI goals. Leadership institutes increased individual learning, or personal mastery, and contributed to the active engagement of team members in generating a vision for their institutions and then pursuing those visions.

To a certain degree, RCCI's specific access and economic development goals limited the extent to which teams were able to promote organizational learning within their respective institutions. These goals became operational in terms of projects that contributed to organizational learning, but at the same time were limited to specific sectors of the institutions. On a majority of campuses, RCCI served as an important vehicle for promoting organizational learning and team participants became important resources within the colleges.

VALUE SYSTEMS THAT PROMOTE EXPANDED ACCESS

Access has long been a major guiding value at community colleges, but RCCI demanded attention be given to the very poor and the underserved, and to institutional practices and policies related to access. Because of persistent tensions caused by subtle as well as overt racism, access requires constant examination and redefinition at the operational level. Most

RCCI colleges developed projects to ease the entry into academic programs and to improve academic support and retention services. Some had dramatic impact in restructuring developmental studies, advising, and basic studies programs, resulting in measurable improvement in student retention and graduation rates. Others developed distance education capacities and increased communication and educational partnerships with K-12 schools.

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Easing modes of entry and improving academic support programs, however, proved to be only the first step in acting on institutional value systems to increase access for minority and other underserved populations. Support services had to be re-examined to meet the needs of nontraditional students for childcare, transportation, family counseling, and access to lab facilities, libraries and other resources. Closer attention to access also required a look at curricular issues. General education and technical curricula often fail to provide a multicultural orientation that engages minority students in culturally relevant ways that lead to meaningful understanding. In other words, expanding access requires not only physical outreach and accommodation, but also attention to mental and cultural models brought to the campus by the students. Tribal colleges, which based their RCCI goals on respect for the individual as well as community,

tended to be more successful at integrating the values and customs of their communities within the process of transforming institutional culture to promote access.

VALUES PROMOTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Promoting economic development outside the realm of labor force training was a new idea for most of the RCCI pilot colleges. The majority have launched small business development centers and established limited partnerships with local industries, but it was too much of a stretch for most to extend the boundaries of economic development beyond these centers.

SUCH PROJECTS SERVE TO ESTABLISH OR REINFORCE THE VALUE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AS PART OF THE COLLEGE MISSION WHILE ALSO INCREASING ACCESS TO THE COLLEGE.

Southwest Texas Junior College embraced the value of economic development and established a new staff position of industry coordinator, moving the college substantially beyond its traditional mission of general education. The college also sponsored a case study competition in Spring 1998 for university graduate students that provided many ideas for economic development in the region, but ways are still being sought to implement them in future activities and programs.

Other RCCI campuses have made significant steps toward institutionalizing strategies for economic development. Salish Kootenai College created a degree program in business. Southeast Community College established a small business loan fund, the Pine Mountain Development Corporation, which may be the first fund of its kind in the United States created by a community college.

Alabama Southern created a Center for Excellence in Forestry and a CIBA Chemical Program in cooperation with area industries. Northern New Mexico Community College partnered with US West and the Los Alamos National Laboratory to build its telecommunications infrastructure and is offering telemedicine courses and workshops for the region. Such projects serve to establish or reinforce the value of economic development activities as part of the college mission while also increasing access to the college.

APPROACHES THAT VALUE LOCAL CULTURES

Valuing "place-based" economic development and "people-based" education and training have emerged in recent years as important strategies for local development. One of the significant lessons learned from the RCCI experience is that the best practices for increasing access and expanding opportunities for economic development evolve from the local context and use the assets of the local cultures. The integration of local cultures within the vision of a community college is essential for developing and maintaining institutional relevance to the diverse populations of rural societies. Too often the educational culture that prepares individuals for the workplace neglects the development of the whole person and does not reaffirm the value of his or her local culture.

TOO OFTEN THE EDUCATIONAL CULTURE THAT PREPARES INDIVIDUALS FOR THE WORKPLACE NEGLECTS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WHOLE PERSON AND DOES NOT REAFFIRM THE VALUE OF HIS OR HER LOCAL CULTURE.

RCCI pilot colleges learned the importance of promoting a multicultural environment on their campuses, including the integration of culturally appropriate strategies to increase access and encourage regional economic development. Northern New Mexico Community College, for example, offers classes in the arts that teach weaving and furniture building within the traditions of the local Pueblo and Chicano cultures. Southeast Community College is developing an entrepreneurial training program around traditional Appalachian crafts, and Alabama Southern Community

College has taken the lead in rediscovering the local art and literary heritage of its county, promoting the area as the "Literary Capital of Alabama." Tribal colleges have developed access and economic development projects that explore, identify and practice traditional native values that enhance well-being, balance and respect for the individual, the family, the community, and the earth. At Fort Belknap College, a team of people shares business stories brought about by RCCI. At all three tribal campuses in the pilot group, RCCI has been responsible for cultivating an atmosphere of positive thinking at a community level.

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As RCCI participants traveled to each others' campuses for workshops and leadership institutes, the teams acquired a new sensitivity and understanding of the richness of their own culture and how they might tap into those assets to encourage change. Integrating a multicultural perspective across the campus, however, is a challenge. Despite the integration of local culture into a few segmented projects, the curriculum often lacks courses that help students understand themselves within their own historical, multicultural, economic contexts.

Nevertheless, the initiatives of the RCCI pilot colleges demonstrated their capacity to become "learning organizations" capable of responding to new ideas and a rapidly changing environment. RCCI workshops, field trips, and planning sessions helped to broaden the knowledge and commitment of individual team members to new organizational goals and to create an organizational environment that values teamwork, place, and systems thinking. Above all, RCCI helped the colleges further the process of transforming institutional culture from one defined by personal goals, hierarchical relationships, and national assumptions to one shaped by collaborative visions, collective decision-making, local strengths, and a broader view of the role of the college in the community.

NEW LEADERSHIP STYLES

Community colleges exist today within an environment where demographic, economic, and technological changes are rendering many institutional practices obsolete. At the heart of changes in institutional culture is a new approach to leadership. Colleges need leaders who understand the challenges and who can inspire others to change the old ways of doing things. Like the new civic entrepreneur building alliances across the community, college leaders must go beyond the traditional day-to-day transactions of management. Distressed rural communities often have little experience with collaborative approaches to leadership, so the challenge there may be greater than elsewhere. Leaders may have to look for ways to create profound change. Transformational leadership requires not only a philosophy oriented toward change but also a willingness to envision new possibilities, to define new roles and responsibilities for institutional leaders, to engage the community, to take risks, and to adopt collaborative forms of decision-making.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP REQUIRES NOT ONLY A PHILOSOPHY ORIENTED TOWARD CHANGE BUT ALSO A WILLINGNESS TO ENVISION NEW POSSIBILITIES ...

Vision

A shared vision is critical in the transformation of an institution. The basis of the RCCI Vision-to-Action planning process is a re-examination of the college mission, an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the community, and the formulation of a vision for

change. The Vision-to-Action process helped participants see where their institution's actions were not aligned with its values, and to change their actions. On some campuses this vision evolved from a president's dynamic leadership or ability to sway others. On other campuses it emerged from the collective vision of the team itself. In either case, leadership was transformational only when leaders could motivate stakeholders—students, faculty, staff, and community members—to act on the values reflected in the vision. When RCCI activities remained segmented and out of the mainstream and leaders confined their roles to the “expected,” key stakeholders were left out and a new shared vision did not emerge across the institution as a whole.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Transformational leadership requires the redefinition of roles and responsibilities within the institution. The literature on organizational transformation promotes the view that all members of the organization should be actively engaged in change, the aim being to achieve organizations capable of higher levels of productivity and personal satisfaction among

... NOT ALL LEADERSHIP COMES
FROM TRADITIONAL LEADERS.

employees. The RCCI approach to institutional change through team building evolved from the understanding that when people work at difficult tasks as a team, individuals help each other achieve common goals. In the process, staff and faculty roles shift to accommodate the task, secondary leadership emerges to assume new responsibilities, and the decision-making process broadens across the college. In transformational organizations not all leadership comes from traditional leaders. Affiliation with RCCI enabled presidents to shift responsibilities to team members, redefining a number of roles. When new institutional goals arose from within the team, for example, the president's role became one of reducing organizational constraints in order to enable others to exert leadership.

At some RCCI colleges, dynamic presidential leadership initially helped to establish a foundation for change and to create an environment that valued the initiative as an institutional priority. Eventually the process served to broaden the base of campus leadership and to define a leadership style that is more collaborative and inclusive. Such leadership helped to transform the RCCI from just another grant-funded project into an agent of long-term institutional change. At Southeast Community College, for instance, the president's subtle, participatory leadership style fostered strong community identification with the college and a sense of institutional ownership among the faculty. While maintaining an active personal involvement in the RCCI team, he refrained from “directing” the team's work and adopted a role as an “encourager.” This led to the emergence of a strong second tier leadership that strengthened the college's capacity to build a “collaborative community” within the institution. Similar processes occurred at Fort Peck Community College, Salish Kootenai College, and Southwest Texas Junior College (Eller et al., 1999).

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Engaging the community in new partnerships with the college to increase access and economic development is a core element of the RCCI process. Those colleges that succeeded in involving community representatives as active team members achieved greater integration between college initiatives and the needs of the local community. Institutions that were slower to embrace community participation tended to develop RCCI projects that were

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more structurally tied to the institution and utilized more traditional strategies for program delivery.

Including community representatives on the RCCI teams broadened the input of ideas and talent available for project development and helped to connect the new vision for the campus with the economic and social realities of the community. Community involvement helped college personnel to recognize their own strengths and limits. "No one person has the answer," commented a faculty team member at Alabama Southern. Outside sources, including community and industry, often provided the answers. Even on tribal campuses where tradition has strongly valued community involvement, RCCI helped expand efforts to support individuals and families and increased respect for communications and collaborations with tribal government, schools, tribal agencies, businesses, and traditional societies. One tribal college president concluded that the "whole idea...was community involvement." The most important thing the college got from RCCI, he noted, was the ability to collaborate and communicate.

Risk-Taking

Institutions that are comfortable doing things the way they have always been done are often reluctant to take risks that might alter traditional power relationships and turf boundaries, or open the institution and its leaders to criticism. Transformational leaders accept risk as a prerequisite for real change, a condition that accompanies entrepreneurial values of creativity and innovation.

Participation in RCCI encouraged community college leaders to take risks in developing new processes for institutional organization and in reaching out to establish community partnerships. In some cases this meant that presidents needed to relinquish some traditional power in a way that would allow new or previously unheard voices to surface. There was a risk in doing that. It was possible that the leader could lose stature by making the college more visible, warts and all. The presidents and faculty who were most willing to take that risk were most successful in establishing new relationships with the community and in transforming institutional cultures and structures.

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Building institutional capacity is the "bottom line" of RCCI, and ultimately the measure of that capacity is the degree to which colleges structure themselves to meet the changing needs of their communities. Organizational infrastructure includes the organizational forms and processes that allow organizations to routinely carry out certain activities in an effective and efficient manner. It must take into account mission, partnerships, roles, delivery systems, marketing, and self-assessment.

Mission

RCCI either helped colleges build upon initial steps already taken regarding expanded access and economic development, or it spurred them to take those steps. Where those

WHERE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP RESULTED IN NEW INSTITUTIONAL VALUES AND PRACTICES, THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE COLLEGE AND THE WAY THE COLLEGE COMMUNITY VIEWED ITSELF CHANGED AS WELL.

became part of a new way of doing things, new institutional commitments to economic development or community collaborations became evident in mission statements, promotional literature, web pages, or elsewhere. Where transformational leadership resulted in new institutional values and practices, the public perception of the college and the way the college community viewed itself changed as well. Coahoma Community College team members reported that developing the college's new mission statement and goals was one of the "most significant accomplishments" of the RCCI work. Where RCCI initiatives remained segmented—as separate projects, for example—the impact on mission was limited.

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Almost all of the RCCI pilot colleges developed partnerships with external organizations and businesses, ranging from consultations and joint planning committees to formal structures for program delivery and resource sharing. On many campuses, RCCI helped create an environment where collaboration became the strategy of choice when responding to new situations and opportunities.

... COLLABORATION BECAME THE STRATEGY OF CHOICE WHEN RESPONDING TO NEW SITUATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

Southeast Community College's experience working with local banks and government agencies to establish the Pine Mountain Development Corporation contributed to partnerships with local schools to increase access and to partnerships with local citizens to establish a county leadership program. Hazard Community College took advantage of its RCCI experience to launch a local educational technology collaborative that won a national competition for a NASA Challenger Learning Center. Alabama Southern Community College's successful partnerships with business and industry led to a wide range of partnerships with state and local private and public organizations to promote the arts and literature in its service region. On some campuses this capacity expanded and strengthened already existing relationships; on others it stimulated new collaborations and organizational structures.

EXPANDING FACULTY AND STAFF ROLES

Broadening the mission and strengthening the capacity of colleges to partner with local organizations resulted in expanded faculty and staff roles. At Northern New Mexico Community College and Southwest Texas Junior College, specific grant-funded projects to increase access and economic development brought new staff into the college community and influenced the way other faculty conceived their roles and responsibilities. Participating pilot colleges in Kentucky increased core programs that emphasize Appalachian culture—Southeast Community College through its new Appalachian Center and student-oriented craft programs, and Hazard Community College through the Mountain Writing Project and its annual Conference on Teaching and Learning for Appalachian teachers. These structural changes should help to sustain the value systems inherent in the RCCI projects and continue changes in institutional culture and leadership styles fueled by the initiative.

COMMUNITY-ORIENTED PROGRAMS AND DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Almost universally, involvement with RCCI helped participating colleges expand their contacts with the surrounding community. Some campuses improved their relationships with business and education. The president of Salish Kootenai College attributes to RCCI an increase in community involvement and increased economic development brought about by inclusion and collaboration. Other colleges developed community leadership programs, expanded their contacts with local craftspeople and cultural leaders, and responded to new funding opportunities. Northern New Mexico Community College helped raise millions of dollars for technology development and training. A Department of Housing and Urban Development grant has allowed student interns to work in community building agencies in its region.

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leaders, and responded to new
funding opportunities.

Some colleges restructured their delivery systems for community-oriented programs. Alabama Southern showcased local visual and performing artists through a new museum collection. Southeast Community College combined four separate programs under a new umbrella, the Community and Business Development Center. Fort Peck Community College's new Department of Community Services coordinates the Center for Family & Community Development, National Center for Excellence, Tribal Law & Justice Training Program, Even Start Family Program, Tribal College Extension, Distance Learning, Community Business Assistance Center, Rural Systemic Initiative, Food Stamps and Nutrition, Montessori Language Immersion Schools, and the Daya Tibi (Community Wellness Center).

Other colleges are considering the possibility of similar restructuring to bring small business programs, continuing education, technical training, leadership development, and other outreach programs together under a single administrative unit. Such efforts represent the growing capacities of the institutions to respond to external challenges and opportunities and reflect the willingness of institutional leaders to commit resources to new programs and structures.

MARKETING

Involvement with RCCI provided opportunities for participating colleges to increase their own skills and develop new partnerships for marketing the college. Participation in a national pilot project alone attracted new attention to the colleges, and some took advantage of their affiliation with RCCI to promote an image of the college as a campus on the move. Alabama Southern assembled a 14-member public relations advisory committee consisting of representatives of business, industry, civic groups, schools and other community organizations. Several institutions received national recognition for innovative programming, and they leveraged additional funding and community support to build upon their accomplishments.

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT

Data-driven assessment of institutional performance is necessary for effective organizational management not only because it keeps organizational leaders reality-based, but it alerts them to shifts and trends that are occurring. Salish Kootenai College's Business Center tested a research software program called "Track Success" designed to track clients and provide feedback to both clients and the college. It helps assess the impact on economic development through individual and personal efficacy, family kinship, cultural and spirituality, and community assets.

DATA-DRIVEN ASSESSMENT OF
INSTITUTIONAL ... KEEPS
ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS REALITY-
BASED [AND] ALERTS THEM TO
SHIFTS AND TRENDS.

The RCCI strategic planning process required significant institutional self-assessment at the outset, and campuses have maintained or expanded that capacity over time. Campuses that integrated RCCI programs into the culture and structure of the college used the strategic planning process as an impetus for creating a permanent culture of campus decision-making based on data. As a result of their RCCI experience, several colleges established or expanded offices of institutional research to help guide institutional change. For example, Southwest Texas Junior College utilized its Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning, which works with the college's instructional computing and institutional research office, to ensure continuous quality improvement. Units such as these help colleges sustain linkages among institutional data, institutional goals, and strategic planning.

BUILDING RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO SERVE
AS AGENTS OF CHANGE REQUIRES THE
TRANSFORMATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CULTURES,
DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES, AND
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES.

LESSONS LEARNED

THE CREATION of collaborative, dynamic communities requires institutions that can learn and change to meet the demands and opportunities of the future. Building rural community colleges to serve as agents of change requires the transformation of institutional cultures, decision-making processes, and organizational structures. The experiences of the nine RCCI pilot colleges suggest that institutions must:

- ◆ Take a transformational rather than an "add-on" approach to change.
- ◆ Reaffirm mission and values to include expanded access and economic development.
- ◆ Realign institutional resources and systems to reflect mission and values.
- ◆ Support a multicultural orientation in curriculum, partnerships, and community values.
- ◆ Commit to excellence, shared decision-making, and responsiveness to internal and external constituents.
- ◆ Commit to the learning organization model.
- ◆ Conduct routine data-driven analysis of internal and external environments.
- ◆ Recognize that systemic change evolves from self-assessment, planning, and collaboration.
- ◆ Promote transformational leadership across the institution and the community.
- ◆ Build teams and develop partnerships to distribute responsibility.
- ◆ Create communication structures based on respect, trust, and inclusiveness.
- ◆ Take risks and explore innovation.
- ◆ Be open to new ideas and learn from others.
- ◆ Be willing to persevere over the long run.

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